DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 055 294 CG 006 662

AUTHOR Lutes, Carol
TITLE Equal Opportunity -- and You.
INSTITUTION Public Service Commission of Canada.
PUB DATE 1 Jun 71
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association Convention, Toronto, May 30 - June 2, 1971

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Career Change; *Career Choice; *Career Planning; *Females; Role Perception; *Vocational Counseling; Womens Education; *Working Women
IDENTIFIERS Canada

ABSTRACT

The author suggests alternatives to chip away at occupational traditionalism and vestigal hang-ups shared by men and women about women in the world of work, and which encourage the development of programs to ensure that equal opportunity will be a reality. Background statistics are presented which indicate that women are increasingly entering the world of work, but are increasingly concentrated in the relatively less skilled, less rewarded, and less rewarding fields of work. Restrictive hiring practices and subtle forms of discrimination which still persist based on old myths about women's capacities, performances, their work life expectancy, and their absence rates are cited. Several ideas are recommended for counselors. Among these are: special careers' nights for girls and their parents to broaden the perspectives of both on their work horizons; more and better occupational information designed to erode the stereotypes and encourage a wide range of occupational choice; stimulate early interest in developing individuality of girls; use of parent conferences to help parents understand changing roles and changing choices in the career decisions of girls; and use of co-educational group counseling sessions to explore attitudes and expectancies. (MA)

ED055294

PUBLIC SERVICE FONCTION PUBLIQUE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY — AND YOU

Address by

Carol Lutes
Co-ordinator
Equal Employment Opportunities
Public Service Commission of Canada

at

Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association Convention

Toronto

June 1, 1971

ED055294

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY — AND YOU

This national convention with its symposia ranging over so many dynamic and experimental topics, is in many ways a microcosm of the moment. A moment in which the challenges of change are everywhere about us — and have created a sense of urgency and a demand for new commitments.

In Canada, as in other industrialized nations of the world, vocal elements of this change are the youth revolution and that even more controversial and more polemical revolution over women's rights. New patterns and concepts of socio-cultural roles are emerging from both these revolutions, and with them a growing awareness that no potential — be it "woman power" or "youth power" — can be under-utilized by a society without imperiling that society's future.

Two recent documents, the report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and a study entitled "Sex and the Public Service", prepared by Kathleen Archibald for the Public Service Commission, shed disturbing light on Canadian realities, documenting with clarity the barriers to equal opportunity and concluding that prompt, and in some cases drastic, corrective surgery was needed if women were ever to participate fully and equally in our society.

The two reports are not gathering dust on some bureaucratic back-shelf. They have had — and are continuing to exert — a major impact.

..2

Establishment of our office of Equal Employment Opportunities at the Public Service Commission was a major recommendation of the Archibald report which concluded that a combination of forces, many of them difficult to define because they operate in those grey areas of attitudes and prejudices, were contributing to inequitable treatment of women in the federal public service.

As Prime Minister Trudeau noted in a recent Toronto speech on the status of women, a detailed examination of the 167 recommendations from the Commission's report is currently underway by five inter-departmental working parties which have been set up under co-ordination by the Privy Council Office to make recommendations for Cabinet decision. All of which is a tangible indicator that equality of opportunity has become a matter of high priority.

As a point of interest, the United States' Status of Women's Commission set up in 1961 by the late President Kennedy resulted in 152 laws being changed. I would not venture to speculate on how many laws will be changed by the 167 recommendations of Canada's Status of Women's Commission. But my experience in the 14 weeks since I joined the Public Service Commission and my work as the Commission's representative on the inter-departmental working parties reviewing the report lead me to view the prospects positively. A number of steps already have been taken. For example, legislation already has been introduced by Labour Minister Bryce Mackasey to provide up to

15 weeks of unemployment insurance benefits to women whose earnings are interrupted by pregnancy --- I could list others. However, in the brief time available today, I would prefer to note initially those elements of the report dealing with guidance and counselling, follow with some general thoughts on the field of counselling, specifically in relation to women and its role in attitude-shaping, and finally to suggest some approaches that counselling take to prepare young people for a changing world.

To make yet another reference to the U.S. Status of Women's report, it is worth noting that some of its major recommendations were in the area of guidance and counselling and their impact so significant that a national conference and a series of regional conferences on the special aspects and problems of vocational counselling for girls followed publication of the report.

Canada's report also focusses sharply on counselling and guidance as a problem area, particularly recommendation 73 in Chapter III on the education and training of Canadian women, which calls on the provinces and territories to:

(a) Provide co-educational guidance programmes in elementary and secondary schools, where they do not exist and

(b) Direct the attention of guidance counsellors to the importance of encouraging both girls and boys to continue their education according to their individual aptitudes and to consider all occupational fields.

..4

The changes that are taking place in the lives of women, their role in the labour force and the importance of full utilization of both male and female potential all point up the need for wise and sound vocational counselling related to modern trends and patterns.

I am prepared to acknowledge that our woman power, one of Canada's greatest resources, is being used more fully and more creatively than ever before in the home, in the community and on the job. However, those of us who are concerned with the effective and creative use of this resource and who are concerned that the education and training women get will equip them for the work world, feel that we are still a long way from satisfactory realization of women's full potential.

In the public service, my particular area of concern, occupational segregation has been one of the chief barriers to equality of opportunity for women, as the Archibald report documented. Admittedly, a few of Canada's 55,000 female public servants are in specialized fields. The report noted there were seven air traffic controllers, one female veterinarian and even one woman lighthouse keeper. But most women in the public service are secretaries, nurses, clerks, librarians, social workers, etc., — occupations traditionally segregated to females.

The aim of my newly established office of Equal Employment Opportunities is to reduce the handicap, to chip away at occupational traditionalism and the vestigal hang-ups shared by both men and women on the subject of women in the work world and to develop programs to ensure that career progression for women in the federal public

service is fully in line with their abilities and ambitions. — In other words to make equality of opportunity a reality.

Indeed "opportunity" has literally become my catchword as well as my key concern these days. And nowhere does the concept apply more than in the areas of education, training and counselling which aim at discovering and developing skills that open up rewarding and creative lines for young people. My point of concentration is the role counselling can play in opening up opportunities for girls and women to achieve these goals so basic to our democratic way of life.

Perhaps some statistical realities about women will serve to put the role of counselling in perspective. Firstly, women are marrying young today, more than one quarter of them before they are 20. In 1968, women workers accounted for more than 34.4% of Canada's work force and more than half were married. We hardly need be reminded that technological advances have given women new freedom simplifying the tasks of housekeeping, taking more and more chores from the home and leaving behind those that are easier to do. It's no surprise then that women in their middle years whose family responsibilities have tapered off increasingly have been looking for jobs — the 35 and over group. The higher the education of a woman the more likely she is to be employed. Not only are women in the world of work in increasing numbers to stay, it seems likely that the rate at which they enter the labour force will continue to increase.

What kind of jobs are women holding now? Are they achieving greater quality of work opportunity? Despite the fact that there has been a marked increase in the number and variety of

women's occupational opportunities women,— and this applies not only to the public service which I noted earlier, but to the private sector as well — are employed in areas which have been traditionally theirs. I believe that those of you who are interested in the training and counselling of girls and women should be quite concerned about this. Although there has been a great increase in the number of employed women, they are becoming increasingly concentrated in the relatively less skilled, less rewarded and less rewarding fields of work.

One measure of the relatively disadvantaged employment status of women is obtained by comparing men's and women's earnings. Figures from the Archibald study showed that in 1968, 90% of female public servants were earning $6,000 or less annually compared with 59% of the men. The study showed that more than 80% were in office or administrative support jobs.

At the other end of the scale, the study noted that only three of 349 senior officers were women. While income is not an entirely satisfactory measure of responsibility, it is an appropriate gauge of recognition. Less than one per cent of Canada's 55,000 female public servants have reached that point of recognition. A man has an 18 times greater chance than a woman of reaching the $14,000 or more salary level.

That there has been much under-utilization of women's skills at all levels is evident. The causes are multi-factored. Many restrictive hiring practices and subtle forms of discrimination still persist based on old myths about women's capacities, their

performance, their work-life expectancy and their absentee rates. I'm sure you have heard them all before: women are not as strong as men, either mentally or physically; women are absent much more than men; all but a few women drop out of the work force after a few years; women have a habit of getting pregnant; women have neither the sense of responsibility nor the interest to maintain managerial roles; women have ability structures which differ vastly from men.

The traditional myth about differing abilities of men and women has proved to be just that. As the Prime Minister noted in his recent Toronto speech: "Are Soviet bridges any less durable because a large proportion of engineers in the Soviet Union are women? Are the people of India, Ceylon or Israel less well served because women head their governments?"

Admitting that women are, on average, less strong than men, what effect does this have on the work situation today? Very little. Most jobs are within the physical strength of the average woman and few well-paying jobs in the public service put a premium on brawn.

As for pregnancy, the Archibald study found the average for female public servants might be two children born during a woman's working years which would mean only four to six months out of her total work life.

..8

As for the absenteeism myth? Currently, in the public service, women are absent roughly 10 hours per year more than men — not a sufficient amount to justify the salary or opportunity gap.

Of course, to put the picture in perspective it is important to recognize that the attitudes of women are often a factor contributing to the gap. Too many view work as a temporary expedient not to be trained for. They drift in but nevertheless find themselves staying for extended periods of time. So extended in fact that the work life expectancy of the average woman totals an impressive 33 years, only four years less than the average working life of the male retiring at that age. Obviously, this work life should be planned and you as counsellors can become a vital link on this planning process standing as you do from your observational vantage point. You have an important job to come to grips with prejudicial attitudes, outmoded customs and occupational stereotypes,to contribute to the considerable myth-shattering which will need to be generated if attitudes about female work roles are to become more realistic.

In these changing times yourrole takes on new and even greater significance. You are challenged as never before to help young people, young women in particular, see more realistically the diversity of roles they can play, to appreciate the growing importance of skills and training if they are to be effective. We need more and better counselling if young women are to be expected to anticipate their life patterns more clearly and constructively than they do today, to see the need for long-term planning and realistic preparation.

To begin with, they should be encouraged to view marriage as neither the terminal point nor the goal of their education. Too often a girl's idea of what life will be -- her time-horizon -- hardly extends beyond her 25th year and our society condones this short-term view of life. Education is a continuing life-long process and this concept must be instilled early since girls in particular have discontinuities in their educational and vocational lives. They need to be convinced that it is acceptable to let their brains show; that they can remain feminine and be considered "desirable" females while they conduct themselves with intelligence, dignity and responsibility.

The difficulties of helping girls prepare for an adult life which will tap their fullest potential can hardly be over-estimated chiefly because for so long we have been unwilling to face squarely the magnitude of the changes which have occurred in women's lives. Changes which seem to run directly counter to the cherished stereotypes of the feminine role.

Girls are half of any given generation and they must live and work together with boys in the world of tomorrow. They must be prepared to carry their share of this burden but be aware that the life patterns through which they can discharge their responsibilities are necessarily different from those of boys as well as being vastly different from the life patterns of women who have preceded them.

..10

As counsellors you must also keep in mind that life patterns are changing more rapidly for women than men. The life pattern of men is a single one involving a continuous developmental career pattern integrated with marriage. The life pattern of women may take one of a variety of different forms: full-time homemaker; the integration of career and marriage; a discontinuous pattern, either in the same career or a different one; and lastly sole commitment to a career. This factor alone means that counselling for girls must be different from that of boys. In a society so fundamentally committed to the concept of freedom of choice and equality of opportunity for all we too often ignore this fact that the variables affecting choice differ for boys and girls.

We consider it perfectly logical that men find their identity and self-fulfillment through integrating a career and parenthood but we assume that women do not have the same need for integration. We expect men to make maximum use of their talents and we exert pressures of many kinds to motivate them to accept their obligation to society but we also exert subtle pressures to motivate girls to undervalue comparable talents. These are the paradoxes.

In spite of this recognition that the life patterns of men and women are and will continue to be different, counsellors have tended to use the same approaches for boys and girls without considering basic differential factors affecting their life patterns and choices — biological and psycho-social sex differences and parental attitudes, to name only three.

1. The oldest and most persistent factor molding women's lives is the biological factor of maternity. Women's work is inextricably entangled with the central human concerns of marriage, motherhood and the relation between the sexes and of these three motherhood is the primary, although increasingly in this post-pill era, only a fraction of a woman's traditional and essential contribution to society may be work directly related to motherhood.

The functional necessities of biology and social structures have an inter-relationship with the moral values associated with motherhood and through it with marriage and the relationship between the sexes -- an inter-relationship too complex to explore in these brief remarks today. The essential point I would like to make is that these values are deeply rooted in biology and in human and even in pre-human history. When changed circumstances appear to threaten them we tend to retreat into fantasy -- into a never-never land of values divorced from facts. The stories of popular women's magazines are a good example of this retreat from reality. Even more incredible examples can be seen every time you turn on a television set where an incessant barrage of advertising parades three types of women across the T.V. screen: hedonistic, sexy members of the Pepsi generation; kitchen lackeys who go into ecstacy every time they look at their shiny floors and their whitest white laundry; and lastly, the group that U.S. writer Marya Mannes refers to as "constipated grannies", whose sole concerns are their dentures and problems of regularity.

In a society that presents such gross distortions of reality, it's surprising that anyone can still ferret fact from myth.

..12

2. The second differential factor which I would like to note is the complex phenomenon of psycho-social sex differences. The sources of psycho-social differences between the sexes are obscure. However, controlled empirical observations have established that inborn differences in temperament do exist between the sexes, although environmentalists will argue that education and the social milieu shape such differences.

One purpose of socialization practices and of education is, of course, to create social differences between the sexes, although in highly developed educational systems like our own there are increasing pressures to eliminate such differences in certain areas. For example, we don't have girls play football and we usually don't encourage boys to take home economics but we expect equal achievement from both sexes in basic academic subjects.

Cultural influences, both those rooted in myths and social tradition and those arising from a passionate commitment to revolutionary change, have tended to muddle our theories on psycho-social sex differences. Freud's theory of women as castrated males, incomplete therefore inferior, bears the imprint of both Hebrew tradition and the nineteenth century middle class Vienna. While Adler's theory that psychological sex differences would be completely obliterated if society made equal demands upon and gave equal opportunities to both sexes is in the spirit of early twentieth century concern with and commitment to the rights of individuals. Need I add that it is also more in line with the spirit of 1970s attitudes on the subject of equality of opportunity.

It would seem logical to say that psychological sex differences make their contribution primarily in the realm of social values and sex differences in social roles are felt primarily in the domaine of social process. However, since values and process are inextricably meshed, the more the values of one sex as contrasted with the values of the other are reflected in the processes of a given society or any part thereof, the more difficult it will be for the other sex to participate in that process. This is practically illustrated in our society where the values of aggressiveness, competition and dominance are so esteemed in many parts of the occupational structure, especially the upper echelons, as to make these areas of employment uncongenial to most women and indeed to make most women appear unsuitable for employment in them.

Consider, for example, administration in both private industry and the public service, the leading professions and scientific research. It is not that women are discriminated against because they are women but may find they do not fit easily in the situations designed by men for men. On the average women possess the same aptitudes as men, although their values are different. In other words, again speaking in averages, most work that men can do, women also can do. They simply will do it differently. To illustrate, men seem to believe that law piled upon law, and appropriation added to appropriation eventually will solve any social problem -- from drug addiction to poverty -- while women tend to stress the importance of personal relationships and personal responsibility in seeking solutions to social problems.

..14

3. The third and final differential factor I would like to note is parental attitudes. Parental attitudes, expectations and aspirations are, and probably will continue to be, a major influence in the selection of careers, particularly for girls. However, I feel that you as guidance counsellors can broaden the range of possibilities for young girls. You can show them a multiplicity of choices rather than a single choice restricted to a preconceived image of the feminine role. To suggest that you could do this single-handed would be to underestimate the importance of family influence on these choices. Parents, particularly those in low socio-economic levels, need factual information on the changing life-patterns of women in our society.

As one solution to the problem I would like to see the concept of special careers' nights for girls and their parents fully explored as a means of broadening both the girls' and their parents' perspectives on their work horizons and stimulating heightened career aspirations. To achieve understanding and acceptance of changing roles, educators will need to take a front-line role to develop programs enabling both boys and girls to communicate more freely and realistically on the subject of feminine possibilities. This implies counsellors skilled in group counselling and effective in bringing about changes in curricula and of modifying school and parental attitudes. It also implies a counsellor who has faced his or her own biases and prejudices regarding feminine roles.

On the subject of male-female occupational roles, I acknowledge the need for more and better occupational information --

..15

information that will erode traditional stereotypes. The text and illustrations used in careers publications -- and federal government material is a culprit here as well -- all too often have emphasized male occupational roles.

There is a definite need for occupational information to ensure that girls -- and those who counsel them on their career choice -- are aware they are welcome in a broad range of occupations, not simply those in which they have traditionally worked.

The Public Service Commission, which publishes most of federal careers-oriented material addressed to students and teachers across the country, has instituted a policy of avoiding sex-typing references in the text and illustrations of its careers-oriented material, with the objective of heightening awareness of the Public Service as an equal opportunity employer.

This policy is in line with recommendations from both the Archibald and Status of Women's reports and one which we hope to see shortly as established practice in other federal departments as well as at other levels of government which prepare similar attitude-shaping devices that can have such long-range effects on impressionable young minds.

Of course, as educators and counsellors you are a key element in this attitude-shaping process. Indeed as I see it, guidance and counselling will likely undertake a significantly greater share of the functions once served by the traditions of family, social classes

and communities in the education of youth -- in other words revealing to young people the paths that lead to participant adulthood. Of course, you are not expected to choose the paths young people will follow but rather to help them effectively discharge responsibility for themselves by opening up the numerous paths to the future and the crossroads along the way.

Your ultimate objectives as school counsellors are those of our educational system which are defined by the values of a democratic society as being self-realization for each individual through social participation and the fullest possible benefit to society as a whole. It is an imposing task and one which will challenge you to explore creative, unconventional approaches directed to tomorrow rather than yesterday.

Girls, boys, their parents, educators and employers need to adjust to the concept that sex does not define work roles. This will not be achieved by merely modifying conventional techniques of counselling. As I have attempted to point out today, many of the obstacles to fuller feminine development are a product of our social system rather than of individuals who comprise that system. Counsellors must look to concepts that will mitigate the cultural lag within the system.

How can you do this? Well, I suggest you can begin in the setting most familiar to you -- the counselling cubicle and the guidance director's office.

Consider this question: How early and how enthusiastically do you begin to encourage individuality in girls?

There are, I believe, many ways in which we subtly discourage individuality in girls. We tend to treat their early, possibly fantasized vocational aspirations lightly. Counsellors should look to measures that would include wider exposures to occupational information that is meaningful to the young age group. They should fully explore new methods of individual counselling and opportunities for vocational explorations such as the holiday work experiences the Ottawa-Carleton School Board has successfully used with senior high school students.

A second question! Do you use tests as effectivity as you might?

If in the eighth and ninth grade for example, each girl were given one or two interest inventories, then given an opportunity to discuss her identified preferences with the guidance counsellor, in one or two leisurely interviews she might be helped to develop, at a relatively early age, a more enduring respect for her individuality which could more strongly resist the pressures towards stereotyped femininity, both so socially and biologically potent in mid and late adolescence.

Naturally a girl should be encouraged to use interviews to discuss not only the implications of her preferences for educational plans but also the ways in which they would fit into her life as a married woman since the majority of girls will marry. But the approach

..18

always should be positive. Never ask: "Have you thought how you would manage to do that if you had children?" But rather: "Veterinary practice is a good field for a woman because she can carry it on near her home".

Your own field in fact is a good one for women. Medicine, law, psychiatry, psychology -- all are professions which a married woman can practise in many places, frequently on a flexible time schedule.

As our largest employer of women, the federal public service views itself both as a test tube as well a key target for reform to ensure a working environment that is fully in line with its role as Canada's model equal opportunity employer. The impetus created by the Archibald and Status of Women's reports has provided a solid foundation on which to build programs that will turn recommendations into realities. In the discussion period to follow I would welcome the opportunity to outline these more fully.

To sum up, I would like to offer some approaches that you as counsellors could undertake from your strategic attitude-shaping vantage point -- projects which I feel would stimulate considerable and far-reaching awareness of the concept of equal opportunity among students, parents, educators and employers alike.

(1) That parent conferences, both in groups and individually, be held at frequent intervals throughout the educational process to help parents understand the changing roles of both men and women and

the multiplicity of choices involved in the career decisions of girls.

(2) That counsellors use co-educational group counselling sessions on a regular basis to explore attitudes and expectations as well as provide information on the roles of men and women in the modern world.

(3) That more specialized counselling with all girls, but particularly with those in the lower socio-economic levels, be provided.

(4) That teachers workshops and seminars be organized through your association, at both the national level and regional levels, to provide information and develop guidance and counselling techniques to meet changing needs and emerging trends in our society.

(5) I would like to suggest that your association organize a national conference to discuss the special aspects and problems of vocational counselling for girls, similar to the one I noted in the beginning of my remarks, which took place in the U.S. following publication of the U.S. Status of Women's report. A series of regional meetings on this topic, organized through the various branches of your association, is an alternative idea.

I hope by my remarks today I haven't conveyed the impression that I would like to push all young women into the work world. In reality the push is already there. Rather, I would hope that our principal concern will be to help young people focus realistically on the world they face and make appropriate choices.

Counselling in the '70s and '80s is going to require new approaches and efforts to meet changing realities. I'm sure you feel, as I do, that the issue is important enough to warrant your active concern and indeed the concern of all who are in position to influence and affect the decisions of young people and prepare them for our changing world.

---ooo---

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: THE MYTH -- THE REALITY

Equal opportunity, what it's all about.

What it's all about, particularly in the federal work sphere, will get a thorough airing at this seminar which will focus on both the myths and the realities of women's role in the work world.

Chairman for the session is Carol Lutes, Co-ordinator of the Public Service Commission's newly established Equal Opportunities Program. The Equal Opportunities Program, which was an outgrowth of the Public Service Commission's study "Sex and the Public Service" by Dr. Kathleen Archibald, has been set up to ensure equal employment opportunities within the public service by developing and co-ordinating plans to permit women to attain levels of responsibility related to their abilities and ambitions.

Why the need for such a program? The Archibald report, a comparative study of the work patterns of men and women in a broad spectrum of occupational groupings within the public service, offered some perspectives which were as enlightening as they were disturbing. It concluded that a combination of reasons contributed to inequitable treatment of women in such areas as recruitment, selection standards, job training and promotion to management positions. In terms of status, the study noted that among 500 persons in the most senior level of the public service, only three were women. The majority - in fact some 90% - were in the administrative support category or working in other so-called traditional female fields such as social work, teaching, nursing, library science, etc.

The reasons for it? Dr. Archibald concluded that a good deal of the problem was due to attitudes and prejudices, the end product of which is manifest in a kind of abstruse discrimination --- an elusive but nevertheless effective stumbling block to career development for the woman with potential and ambition.

CG 006 662

What's the solution? Basically, it's a question of attitude change, involving a good deal of myth-shattering and education to create greater awareness on the part of both men and women. How successful it will be is difficult to predict at this point. However, as Canada's largest employer of women, the public service views itself as both a test tube and a key target to reform to prove that women can haveequal opportunities with men in the world of work.

A full and frank discussion of all aspects of this topic will emphasize active audience involvement.

--30--